

Washington Headquarters
Rocky Hill, Somerset County, New Jersey

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PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA
District of New Jersey

Historic American Buildings Survey
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133 Central Avenue, Rahway, New Jersey

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Washington Headquarters
Rocky Hill, Somerset County, New Jersey

Owner: Washington Headquarters Association

Date of Erection: 1760

Architect:

Builder: A man named Leonard

Present condition: Good; it was moved in 1897 from its original foundation to a safer site, owing to the blasting at the quarry.

Materials of construction: Foundation - stone

Exterior walls frame with brick filling; two story veranda on south elevation

Interior walls - plaster

Roof - gable, new asbestos roofing

Historical Data:

This mansion, built by a man named Leonard, passed afterwards into the hands of Judge John Berriens, who served as Judge of Somerset County and later was Justice of the Supreme Court.

Congress had been meeting in Philadelphia and certain regiments stationed near the city had mutinied due to long arrears of leave and pay. Congress decided

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to move to some place between New York and Philadelphia since New York was still occupied by the British; Princeton was chosen. Certain problems facing Congress called for the counsel of Washington, who at this time was at Newburgh on the Hudson. Colonel George Morgan knowing that the place was advertised for sale rented it for Washington's use. Hither Washington came on August 23, 1783. The house was large enough to house the general, his wife, staff, and baggage. We read that the house originally had more than twenty rooms. Washington remained here at Rockingham, his last headquarters of the Revolution, until November 10, 1783. Here many of his friends gathered, among these were Thomas Paine, James Madison, Robert Morris, Alexander Hamilton, Thomas Jefferson, and John Paul Jones; hither also came Charles Peale to paint the portrait of Washington for Princeton University to replace the one of George III; Joseph Wright of Bordentown came to paint another picture which now hangs in the Pennsylvania Historical Society; here the youthful William Dunlap painted the Father of His Country.

Early in October 1783, Martha Washington had left Rockingham for Mt. Vernon. Washington saw her on her way as far as Trenton where he met General Greene and the two rode back to Princeton together. This was the last time these two saw each other.

Three hundred boys from Maine camped around the house, waiting to be discharged. They gave vent to their homesickness by drawing ships on the siding on the south elevation. Their sketches can still be seen.

Today Rocky Hill has been furnished with authentic contemporary pieces. However, it is the bedroom and study of Washington on the south-east corner of the second floor that is most interesting to us. In this room, with its blue woodwork and

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whitewashed wall, Washington wrote his Farewell Address to the Army; made notations on peace establishments, the location of the capital, and on the terms of treaties.

Bibliography:

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Field Books and Drawings of Survey

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Reviewed Aug 20, 1936

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The date for this house has always been taken from the fireback, 1764 or when misread 1734. It may be possible that the house was erected earlier and the fireback was added subsequently. John Dalley's map made shortly after 1745 shows John Berrien's house. If this house did not exist Berrien lived in another on the same site.

The Berrien family were French Huguenots who fled to Holland and later to America in 1669. John Berrien came to Somerset County from Newton, Long Island. He was taxed in Franklin Township in 1735 and may have built this house about that date. He served as Judge of Somerset County in 1739 and was Justice of Supreme Court in 1764. Berrien died before the Revolutionary War; it was his widow who was hostess to Washington. A son of his, Major John Berrien, was an aide to Washington, and his son John Macpherson Berrien was Attorney-General to Jackson. Major John Berrien moved to Savannah after the war. The property in 1802 came in the possession of Frederick Cruser. In 1830 the owner was David H. Morent. Martin Howell possessed the house in 1872. It was conveyed to the Rocky Hill Quarry Company and was used as quarters for Italian laborers.

In 1897 twenty acres including the house was purchased by the Rocky Hill Headquarters Association. The house was moved a few hundred yards up the hill for safety.

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The two story frame building on the east end was built in 1897 for the Association. The present slave kitchen was erected a few years ago to replace the present one.

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